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Faith-based Communities: Frequently Asked Questions about H1N1 Flu (Swine Flu)

What is H1N1 flu?

H1N1 flu, also known as “swine flu,” is a virus that can spread from people who are infected to others through coughs and sneezes. When people cough or sneeze, they spread germs through the air or onto surfaces that other people may touch. H1N1 virus is not transmitted from pigs to humans or from eating pork products.

What are the symptoms of H1N1 flu?

The symptoms of H1N1 virus in people are similar to seasonal flu: fever, cough, sore throat, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people have reported diarrhea and vomiting.

What should I do to keep from getting the H1N1 flu?

First and most important: wash your hands and avoid close contact with people who are sick.

Can I go to large gatherings like religious services, concerts, and sports events?

To date, the severity of the H1N1 flu outbreak appears to be similar to a regular winter flu season. Make decisions about going to large gatherings as you would during a typical winter flu outbreak. If you want to do everything you can to avoid catching H1N1 flu virus, avoid large gatherings. For those who are ill or have symptoms of influenza, it is especially important not to participate in group gatherings.

Communion is part of my religion. Will I get the H1N1 virus from taking communion from a shared vessel?

The virus can be spread from person to person from saliva by sharing the same cup or vessel. You can opt out of drinking from a shared cup and take the host only, or drink from individual disposable mini-cups if available.

Should I be concerned about close contact and handshaking during religious services?

Consider other alternatives for expressing unity and community that don't require close contact. For example, some church leaders have encouraged parishioners to acknowledge the passing of the peace and benediction through alternate ways other than handshaking and hugging.

What should I do if I am sick?

- Stay home when sick—including from work, school and religious gatherings—and don't travel. Get better and keep others from getting sick.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or your inner elbow when you cough or sneeze.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze. If you don't have access to soap and water, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

Are there medicines for H1N1 flu?

Yes, there are antiviral medicines to help treat the H1N1 virus. These prescription medicines work best if started within 2 days of flu symptoms. A health care provider must determine whether someone is sick enough to need the medication. There is currently no vaccine to prevent H1N1 virus.

How should I decide if I should seek medical care?

Use the same judgment you would use during a typical flu season. Do not seek medical care if you are not ill or have mild symptoms for which you would not ordinarily seek medical care. If you have more severe symptoms of fever, cough, sore throat, body aches or are feeling more seriously ill, call your health care provider to discuss your symptoms and if you need to be evaluated.

If you need medical care and don't have a medical provider or health insurance, call the **Community Health Access Program at 800-756-5437**. You will not be asked to provide proof of immigration status.

For more information and frequent updates:

- Ask your religious leader about specific questions related to your faith's practices and traditions.
- Call the Flu Hotline, 877-903-5464, TTY Relay: 711, 9 am - 5 pm, (M - F), interpreters available.
- Public Health – Seattle & King County: www.kingcounty.gov/health/H1N1
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: www.cdc.gov/swineflu